



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.5932 | FAX (517) 373.5944
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/brown/

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Contact: Matt Sweeney
(517) 373-5932

Sen. Brown's legislation to expand value added agriculture program signed into law

LANSING – Legislation to help more people in the agriculture industry benefit from money in the 21st Century Jobs Fund was signed into law Friday, said Sen. Cameron S. Brown, R-Fawn River Township.

“Agriculture is Michigan’s second leading industry and this legislation will help provide opportunities for future generations of Michigan farmers,” said Brown, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture.

The three-bill package offers a grant and low-interest loan program that will leverage private sector funding to accelerate the development and expansion of value added agriculture.

The grants and loans will help ag businesses launch new products or pursue expansions. Examples include establishing an agri-tourism destination, marketing organic products or producing and selling other specialty products.

Public Act 423 of 2006, sponsored by Brown, revamps the Agriculture Development Fund as a revolving fund within the Michigan Department of Treasury and requires the state treasurer to direct investment of the fund. Any money left at the close of the fiscal year must remain in the fund – it will not lapse into the General Fund.

Value added agriculture is a process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. It is an alternative production and marketing strategy where a farmer is not only involved in production of a raw commodity but also takes part in processing, and distribution of the product. Examples of value added agriculture includes food processing, drying, canning, juicing, handcrafting, unique packaging, labeling and marketing.

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